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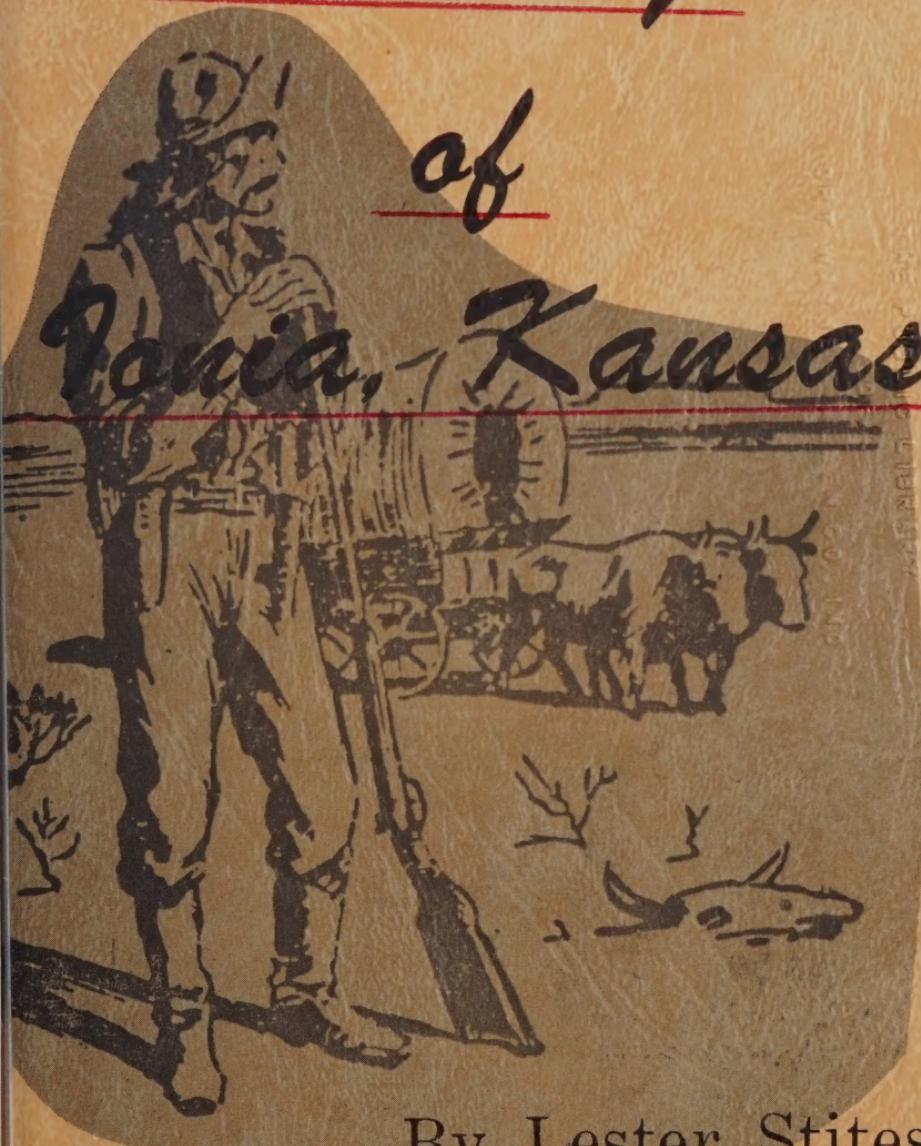




History

of

Bonia, Kansas



By Lester Stites

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**The Author Lester Stites**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This bit of history has been gathered for the sole purpose of preserving the records of the deeds and accomplishments of the men and women who founded and built the town of Ionia. These records are not claimed to be one hundred percent accurate but a great amount of time and effort was spent to make them as authentic as possible.

Had this been done a few years sooner when more of the old settlers were here it could have probably been written with considerably more accuracy. The old settlers are all gone. Alex Burdett, Ionia's oldest citizen, who contributed a considerable amount of this information, died during its collection.

Lester Stites  
Ionia, Kansas



A STREET SCENE IN 1916

## THE BIRTH OF IONIA

Of the many inland towns that were once scattered over the north central part of Kansas, Ionia is one of the very few that still exists as a prosperous community center. In this year of 1956 it still has a population of some 100 souls.

It started way back May 19, 1869 when A. N. Cole took a homestead in a fertile valley on the west side of the East Limestone Creek just 3 or 4 miles north of the forks of the East and West Limestone Creek.

An article in the Jewell County Diamond printed April 8, 1876 states that Mr. Cole had the first homestead in Jewell County. The records show there were several previous to Mr. Cole on White Rock but the Indians ran them out twice, killing several people, so it's possible these claims weren't proved on until later.

The part of town that lay on Cole land was north of the road that runs through Main Street.

The original townsite was on the hill one-half mile west of the present site. Seneca Sumner opened the first store. We can't find much history of Seneca Sumner but we do know that before he opened the store, he lived about one-half mile northwest of the townsite in a sod house. Walter Collie says a Fred James operated a harness repair shop at that time. The new town seemed to be a success.

In 1870, the settlers came thick and fast which brought up the problem of a post office, but the town had no name. The Baxter brothers, Orange, Marvin, and Sanford from Ionia, Michigan had settled near and they proposed the name of their old home town and being prominent and influential, succeeded in having it adopted. Later another brother came, Alfred Baxter, who became the first blacksmith.

## THE FIRST ELECTION

An election was held August 28, 1870, and the first township officers were Wm. Roney, Trustee, S. O. Carmon, Clerk, and John Webster, Justice of the Peace. Each of these men received six votes. Mr. Sumner was commissioned the first postmaster on April 13, 1871, and held the position but a short time when George Barnett took it. Mr. Barnett resigned July 13, 1878 in favor of Herman Colson who was to serve off and on for the next 50 years.

It was said when you wanted your mail, you had to find Mr. Sumner because he carried it in his pocket.

Although the new town seemed to be a success and business was good, people did not settle here as they should. There was no water or shade and in the winter the cold north wind from the open prairie struck the little settlement full force.



**FOURTH OF JULY IN 1910**



**DISTRICT NO. 8, IONIA, KANSAS IN 1908**

## **TOWNSITE IS MOVED**

A few hundred yards to the east, across a large draw, was a beautiful grassy flat covered with large ash and cottonwood trees. Many a time they must have looked at this shady flat and thought of the possibilities of a townsite, thus in 1875 this spot was laid off as a site for their new town. The survey was completed on November 10, 1875. E. T. Bryan was the surveyor.

This move created new excitement and interest fast. A saw mill commenced running July 3, 1875. It was a large steam mill capable of sawing 6,000 feet of lumber per day. Three men owned the saw mill, their names were Donald, Gould, and Goram. There was lots of good lumber close, probably the best for miles around as some of the smaller creeks didn't have much timber on them at the time.

This was not the first saw mill to operate here. Major Horrell had run one some time before, some say he was there as early as 1870. By July of 1876 they had a grist mill attached to the saw engine for grinding meal of all kinds.

## **NEW TOWN SHOWS RAPID GROWTH**

The town grew fast. The first house was completed January 1, 1876 and before the end of the year there were 15 more. On April 18, 1876, the following business establishments were in operation: A shingle machine operated by Morse, Cole, and Loomis; a wagon shop run by Shelden and Snider assisted by J. P. Skidmore; and a blacksmith shop conducted by John More. There was a furniture shop in prospect to be operated by Shelden, Snider, and Cole, and a man named Wesley Whitehead was starting a broom factory.

By this time the country had been settled and all the land taken for four or five years. We will mention the names of some more of the men who took active part in the starting of the new town such as Angelo Colson, carpenter and promoter of community activities; Ed Dietz who was to bring the first telephone into the rural community; Charlie Wheeler, stone mason; and Frank Pound, merchant. In 1877 Herman Colson built a sod shoe shop on Main Street. This little building was only eight by twelve.

## **SCHOOLS**

Ionia's first school house was built of native stone and stood four or five hundred yards north of the Sumner store. We can not establish the exact date of its construction, but it was built some time in the seventies and was discontinued about 1885 when a new one was erected a block north of the present U. B. Church. The first teacher was Bill Stevens. Other teachers were George Beeler, Media Marcellis, Mrs. Herrick, and Rial Rose. School was held twice a year three months at a time. Albert Ross was the last

teacher in the stone school house and finished the term in the new one. Later the Beasore School, two and one-half miles northwest of town was discontinued and the building moved to Ionia to add an additional class room.

In 1918 the present brick building was constructed without the gymnasium which was built in 1949.

By 1884 the town had almost reached its peak of population. There were 300 people living in Ionia. They were rugged people and lots of them had come from the hills of West Virginia and Kentucky. Some of these men were noted for being on the rough side. Old timers claim there was a fight every night. This was probably an exaggeration but there was one man killed in a gun-knife fight in about 1905 when Charlie Jones shot Bill Dugger. This took place a block west of Herm Colson's drug store.

## DOCTORS

The town was without a doctor until the late 70's or the early 80's. Then came Dr. Borst, Dr. Mickle, and Dr. Bundy. It was in 1891 or 1892 that Dr. Duncanson, a young man from Nebraska, came to Ionia and established an office. People that can remember Dr. Duncanson say he was the best doctor the community ever had. He was the old country doctor you read about, practicing for the good he could do, often he would not take pay for his services. He went night and day until he wore himself out and died in 1909 at the age of 47. Soon after 1900 there was a Dr. Tanner who practiced a few years too.

Dr. Poppen was the next doctor after Duncanson and he was there until the fore part of 1930 when he moved to Burr Oak. Then came Dr. Christenson to take Poppen's place. He practiced three or four years and left, thus ending Ionia's medical history.

It was in 1902 and 1903 that Dr. Silvia Seymour, the communities only woman doctor, practiced in Ionia. Her office was in her father's drug store. It was in what is now known as the Dugger building. It is owned by Lester Stites and is used as a recreation hall and the headquarters of the Solomon Valley Coonhunters and Sportsmen Club. Although her marriage to Mr. Alvah Rose ended her regular practice as a physician, she continued to nurse and help sick people until her death on August 3, 1938.

While the subject of doctors is being discussed, we might mention Dr. L. E. Ault, a veterinarian. Dr. Ault practiced in Ionia from 1916 to 1918.

Ionia at one time also had a dentist. He was Dr. Ellis Jones who had an office there for several years around 1910.

By 1885 several store buildings had been added including the Pound brothers store, I.O.O.F. Hall, the Ionia Mercantile, a drug

store, a large two-story building where the Opera house stands now, a livery barn, a hotel, a large carriage factory and blacksmith shop combined and many other smaller buildings that helped to fill the three blocks that was called main street of the new town. Andy George operated the carriage factory and in an ambition to expand, he installed an undertaking establishment overhead in the same building. This building stood on the south side of the street at the east end of town. By this time Herman Colson had replaced his sod shoe shop with a larger frame building and this building still serves as Verda Alcorn's Variety store.

## THE OLD MILL POND

In the early eighties, John Huddleston built a dam across the creek just below the forks east of town and installed a water wheel to power a grist mill. This not only furnished a way to grind all kinds of grain but also a large body of water for boating and fishing. Some tell of being baptized in its muddy waters. All traces of this dam have long since been gone since it ceased to operate in 1890 or a little later.

Until 1879 when the M.P.R.R. came to Jewell, Ionia settlers hauled most of their freight from Waterville over a rough prairie trail of some 80 or 90 miles. Some was hauled from Hastings and some from Hayes. A little later some freight was hauled from Concordia. This of course was hauled in wagons drawn by horses or oxen and it was a long old trip and sometimes took several days. Although railroads were beginning to reach all parts of the west, Ionia was never to be any closer than twelve miles to one. In 1879 the M.P.R.R. went through Jewell 12 miles east. Jewell was one of Ionia's main shipping points for almost fifty years.

In 1888 the Rock Island built a road twelve miles to the north and this also provided an important shipping point at the little town of Eleon (later called Otego) that had sprung up during the building of the railroad. This town, once a thriving community center, has almost disappeared.

The following is a list of merchants operating in Ionia in 1893: Titus and Shuck bought out T. S. Pound and Son; Alcorn and Company had a grocery store; Herman Colson was a druggist and postmaster, he also carried groceries. (W. J. Alcorn succeeded Colson as postmaster that year) W. H. Loomis had a hardware; A. J. Andy George had a furniture store; Sam Cook and Albert Shaw had a two-story carriage shop and Dressler had a hotel called the Dressler House. There was a butcher shop. I. T. Hull was the butcher, N. H. Colson repaired shoes, W. J. Alcorn sold insurance, and Dr. Duncanson was the physician. His office was just east of the Pound Brothers store building.

The barber, J. M. Yerian, had rheumatism and when his ailment

bothered him too much his wife would take his place in the shop. G. T. Rose was a contractor and builder; Mrs. E. Cobern run a millinery store and Mrs. Will Rose run a dressmaking shop.

## THE FAIR GROUNDS

One-half mile north and across the creek east was Ionia's fair grounds which included a grandstand and a race track. This was used from about 1880 to 1885. Each year people from miles around would bring their exhibits to display at the fair. Tents were used to house the different exhibits. Old timers say some great times were had there, including fights and horse races. No one seems to know why this project was so short lived.

In 1880 C. C. Dusenberry came to Ionia from Ohio and purchased the land that lays south of main street from John Reimenschneider. Reimenschneider had homesteaded there in 1870. Mr. Dusenberry was probably the first coonhunter in Ionia and a very progressive man. In 1886 he added the Dusenberry addition to Ionia. The survey was completed on October 12, 1886. E. T. Bryan was the surveyor. Mr. Dusenberry was one of the foremost contributors to the early progress of Ionia.

## CHURCHES

In the early days, as in most communities, the Methodist and U. B. people met in the school house. The school house being small did not furnish sufficient room for their growing congregation so on April 11, 1883 they purchased lot four, block seven from John Huddleston for the sum of \$50.00. The church was built the following year and it served the Methodist group. Some say the church was not built until 1893, but records that should be reliable, show it was built in 1884.

On May 28, 1892, Tommy Pound deeded lots one and four, block eleven to C. C. Dusenberry, Wm. Hooker, E. S. Wright, J. A. Alcorn, and A. J. Hicks in trust for the U. B. Church. The Christian Church was organized on April 12, 1899.

During World War I the churches met together to conserve on fuel etc.

This helped to bring on the agreement of the Methodist and the U. B. to merge at the 1919-1920 conference. It remains today as Ionia's only church, the E. U. B.

In 1921 the old U. B. Church was torn down and the lumber used to build the present parsonage which was completed in 1922. The Christian Church was sold in 1946 and the lumber used in the building of Waldo Wilson's house.

## **ENTERTAINMENT**

At the beginning of the century Ionia was still a place of growing activity. According to Ange Colson, 700 people was an ordinary Saturday night crowd. There were two halls used for shows and other entertainment. One was over the Pound building and one overhead in a large building that sat one block north of the hotel. In those days large stock companies would move into town and show for two or three days. They would hire teams to haul their equipment which consisted mostly of an assortment of trunks and musical instruments, from Otego or wherever they came to on the train.

On the south side of town reaching to the foot of the hill west, was a large cottonwood grove. This was used for a picnic ground. The old soldiers held their camp meetings there too. People still talk of Ionia's fourth of July celebrations. The one in 1910 must have been one of the largest. This one included a parade of horseless carriages. Although autos were not too numerous at that time, a good many showed up that day decorated from crank to tail light.

## **THE IONIA STATE BANK**

Records of Ionia's progress seem to be more plentiful after 1900, at least they are easier to find. It was in 1904 on a Wednesday in October when the stockholders met and elected the following officers: Ben Kuiken, president; R. D. Rose, vice president; A. H. Poppen, F. W. Bevington, C. E. Thompson and G. L. Hudkins, directors. This was the beginning of Ionia's first bank, The Ionia State Bank, with a capital stock of \$10,000.

They started operating in a little building on the south side of the street just east of the Dugger building. It now sets against the south side of Don Schmidt's filling station. This was a very small building and in a short time did not furnish nearly enough room to take care of the business they had acquired, so in about 1906 they built a larger building across the street where they remained until they merged with the Citizens State Bank at Jewell on March 28, 1928. Although during that time many banks over the country failed, the Ionia State Bank remained to protect the deposits of the Ionia community. Some of the other bank officers were Seymour, Billy Becktold and Homer Roach. Roach was the cashier from 1923 to 1928. Ben Kuiken, one of the banks founders, was president throughout its duration.



A STREET SCENE SHOWING THE OLD BANK BUILDING



HERMAN COLSON STORE

## THE IONIA TELEPHONE COMPANY

Up until the fore part of the century if a person wanted to talk to his neighbor he had to contact him personally. There was no telephone and the mail came no closer than the local post office. In the country this was sometimes very inconvenient, especially when the farmer needed extra help with his work, such as thrashing or haying. He would have to contact each man individually until he had acquired the size crew it took for whatever particular job he had to do.

The first telephone in Ionia was in Will Alcorn's store in the west part of the old Mercantile. This telephone was used mostly for business and a means of obtaining the news which would be considerably more up to date than that in the news papers.

Two or three years later in 1903, Ed Dietz, his son Bert, and a son-in-law, Fred Kuiken, purchased the first three telephones in the community. Other neighbors, seeing the advantages of the telephone, became interested and in a short time there were 13 subscribers on two circuits with a switch in Ed Dietz's house to connect them.

By 1906 the town and most of the rural community had telephones. Ionia's first switch board was in Dr. Duncanson's house. Mrs. Duncanson was the operator. It was there only a short time and was moved to an upper room in the Pound building. It remained there until about 1912 when it was moved to the present building. The first subscribers had to purchase their own telephones until 1917 when the Ionia Telephone Company was organized. Stock was sold and it was agreed by the members to turn the telephones over to the company. There was a large demand for Ionia Telephone stock at one time because of the sizable dividends it paid. Art Rooker and his wife manage the office at the present.

## THE MAIL

For many years after the settlers came there was no rural mail delivery. The mail was brought to numerous post offices scattered over the country, generally in little stores set up by individuals to save people a long drive to some distant town.

In early days Ionia's mail was delivered by a star route that went from Red Cloud, Nebraska to Jewell. The first rural delivery was begun in 1902.

In 1906 Ben Kuiken moved to Ionia and purchased the livery barn from "Uncle" Tommy Pound. It set where Waldo Wilson's house now stands. At the same time he started a lumber yard just east of it. He operated the lumber yard only a year or two. After



JIM DUGGER'S CAFE IN 1913



THE LAST OF THE IONIA G. A. R. POST NO. 78  
Joe Clegg, Ange Colson, Chas. Wheeler and I. E. Douglas

several years he sold the livery barn to Frank Buel and later "Dad" Huffman bought it and in 1920 the demand for auto service and the passing of the horse and buggy caused him to convert it into a garage. It was standing vacant when it burned in 1930.

In 1904 many new buildings were erected in the community. This was probably due mostly to a large corn crop that was grown that year. Lots of new houses were built in the country. Frank Bevington sold hardware for nine. They were for Ernest Colson, Clarence Loomis, C. W. Hayman, Milo Amlin, J. A. Livers, Fred Beeler, and Fred Beeler, Jr.

In 1907, Mrs. Carmickle (Tom Carmickle's mother) and Dr. Duncanson's wife, built a millinery store. They stocked it with a large display of fine hats. The millinery business was good in those days because the hat was a very important item in a womans dress.

This was not the first attempt at the millinery business for Mrs. Carmickle. Previously she had operated one just west of the hotel. Mrs. Duncanson was a pardner for a few months but Mrs. Carmickle continued in the business until 1918 when she sold to Mrs. Hoag. Later Vernie Alcorn had a barber shop in the same building. Then came Ella Colson with a grocery store. It is now a grocery store operated by Harry Colson, Ella's father.

## HOPE FOR RAILROAD IS GIVEN UP

All during the fore part of the century, while freighters struggled through mud and dust and the heat and the cold to replenish the ever diminishing supplies of its merchants, Ionia worked and fought almost continuously for a railroad. It was plain to see what a railroad could do for a town already prospering without one.

To add jest to a serious matter, people used to tell this story on Ben Kuiken: At one of their numerous booster meetings, Mr. Beeler said he and two other fellows could build a railroad to Ionia. Immediately Ben Kuiken stood up and said he and one other fellow could build a railroad to Ionia, providing the other fellow had the money.

In 1916 and 1917 the road was surveyed and it looked like a sure thing. Then came World War I and their potential railroad, like many other nonessential things, had to be given up and was finally forgotten. Although a railroad no doubt would have been a wonderful thing for Ionia, it is no longer important. Today the large freight trucks deliver right to their doors.





1895



1956

## LAMPS TO ELECTRICITY

During Ionia's early progress, the old coal oil lamp which burned kerosene, was the only light the people had, possibly a few still used candles. These lamps gave a poor light at the best. One citizen tells of holding a coal oil lamp one night in 1909, while Dr. Tanner and Dr. Duncanson treated two men for knife wounds they had inflicted on each other.

As time went on, carbide and gasoline lights came. Although if the generators were not protected from the cold they would freeze. The carbide lights were probably superior to the gasoline lights as the pressure tanks for the gasoline lights had to be pumped up several times during the evening and some of them used mantles, which presented a problem during the bug season.

While most of the other cities and towns were being furnished with electricity, in 1917 Ionia was still without electric lights. At this time, or a little later, a group of citizens formed a company and purchased a 110 volt light plant. This was a good plant and served them well until the late twenties when the engine finally wore out and would pull the dynamo no longer. From then on, engines of all kinds, including tractors and a Model T, were used to power the plant. The lights became so weak if someone turned on an iron they would get so dim you could hardly see. On show night the kids would gather by the theater door while one would cut the switch on the light plant engine and when the lights came on again the kids would be seated inside.

It was in 1936 when Ivan Rose, the local blacksmith, contacted the R. E. A. officials and started the ball rolling that was to bring electricity to the Ionia community and five surrounding counties.

Offices were set up in Ionia and Ivan Rose was the first manager. The line to Ionia was energized in 1938.

We will not attempt to explain why the offices were moved. Ionia was no doubt caught napping. They put up a wonderful fight against overwhelming odds, but one day in 1949 the office equipment was moved to Mankato.



In 1905, Date Dusenberry started a machine shop one block north of the livery barn and installed the first turning lathe in this territory. Besides being an inventor, with five patents to his credit, he was almost a genius when it came to fixing or repairing machinery. One of his inventions was a two wheel push cart which he manufactured himself. Many of these carts can still be found scattered over the community. Date was in this same shop for 45 years or more and in Ionia from 1880 until his death on February 24, 1955.

## IONIA NEWSPAPERS

No one seems to remember much about the printing business in Ionia. Some think there had been two newspapers printed there, but available records reveal the history of only one and it is very brief.

John Woolman came to Ionia in 1916 or 1917 and started a newspaper. Some say his shop was in the I.O.O.F. hall and others think it was in the Dusenberry building. He must have not stayed long because Brice at Glen Elder was printing the paper in 1918. This paper was called The Ionia Independent and was a full size paper with four pages.

In the early thirties, probably from 1932 to 1935, Perry Betz at Glen Elder printed the Ionia Booster. It had from four to six pages and was not a full size paper. C. D. Sarratt helped make this paper a success.



In 1904 Thornton Rose purchased the old blacksmith shop from Cris Peterson. Mr. Peterson had run the shop for almost ten years. Thornton, as everybody called him, had been a contractor and a carpenter for many years. Mr. Rose tore the old blacksmith shop down and built a furniture store. He was also Ionia's undertaker until about 1921 when he discontinued the furniture business.

Riley More, who had burned out in the 1920 fire, was next in the building with a grocery store. He remained there until his death in 1936. Mr. More conducted a good business and had many friends.

Other merchants who operated in the same building were: Bert Brinkworth, Morris Simmelink, Edgar Brinkworth, Perry Alcorn, Walter Railsback, Francis Rice, Bob Boyer, and Ed Hall who is the present owner.



It may seem to many younger people that Ionia has always had concrete walks but this is not true. Up until 1905 there were no sidewalks at all. The stores would have a board step, or perhaps a large porch in front of them, but to get from one store to the other, one would have to walk on the ground. It was in about 1905 when the board walks were built. These were maintained until Armistice Day in 1918. That night the town people, armed with crow-bars and axes, pried the old walks up and burned them in the street. Later funds were raised and new concrete walks were built to accommodate the larger portion of the town.

Of all the tough characters that came and left the little town, Jim Dugger might have been the toughest. No one seems to know when he came, but it was before 1900 and he came from Kentucky.

After working on the farm for a few years he started a barber shop in the old bank building. Later, probably in 1906 or 1907, he purchased the building Seymour had built for a drug store and started a restaurant which he operated for a good many years.

Dugger came to own seven or eight buildings in Ionia. In 1916 or 1917 he built a large garage just west of the bank. Jim Workman was the mechanic there for years. The building is now owned by John Loomis and used as a machine shed. Old timers say Jim Dugger always carried a gun or a knife and would not hesitate to use either.



The last new business to be erected in Ionia was the Home Garage and Service Station. The service station was built in 1930 by Billy Alcorn. Billy came from Kentucky in 1910 and was a lineman for the telephone company for years. At the time he built the station he was operating a fleet of trucks.

In 1933 the garage was added. Buck Slagle was the brick layer but he died during its construction. Marrill Luckey, Lewis Butts, Kenneth Trubey, Lloyd Hooker, Dick Porter and Cecil Hillman were some of the mechanics that have operated the garage. Billy run the station until he sold to Willis Holloway in 1947 and purchased the drug store which he operated until his death in 1955. Next in the station were Frank Dicker, George Stites and Cecil Hillman. Raymond Jorgenson, once a pardner of Hillman, now owns and operates both the station and the garage. This station is located on the site of the Pound Brothers store.

In 1923, Fred Dicker, a mechanic from Waterville, Kansas, cleared the rubble from the spot where the Ionia Mercantile had burned and constructed the first service station in Ionia. Up to this time, gasoline had been sold by the stores and garages. The station was constructed entirely of steel. Dicker operated the station for eight or ten years. Some of the other operators were Ernest Peters, Clyde Wilson, Cris Sneller, Friday Hall, John Burdett, Bert Alcorn, Floyde Simmelink and Mannie Loomis. Don Schmidt now operates it under the name of the A. & B. Oil Company.

In the early thirties, Glen Pierson built a service station a block north of the Herm Colson store. This station was not a success as the territory was not large enough to support three stations.

In 1947 Floyde Simmelink moved an abandoned school house into town and located it across the alley north of the A. & B. Oil Company. This he converted into a garage which is now operated by Noel Mollenkoph.

After the bank was moved in 1928, the building was vacant for

some time. Then we believe Andrew Leck, Butch we called him, was next in the building with a butcher shop. Others were Evert LaRue with a butcher shop, he later moved to the Dugger building and added groceries; Mrs. Ollie Courier with a grocery store; a hardware store by Hull and Burdett; and a produce station by Kieth Kincheloe. It was then purchased by Lawrence Sanders for a restaurant. Others who had the restaurant were Ona Rice, Minnie Zadina, Jorgensen and Hillman, Merlin Smith, and Mable Wright, the present owner.

## THE BERTNA THEATER

For many years, just west of the Dugger building, set a large two-story building. This store, generally a hardware, had space overhead to display buggies and machinery with a long ramp and a winch to pull them to the upper floor.

Just before or during World War I, Mrs. Bert Dusenberry, who owned the building, had it rebuilt and converted into the present theater. At the time of its completion it was one of the nicest, with a well equipped stage and projection booth including two projectors that were the best. It was named the Bertna Theater, after her daughter, Bertna. The community now owns the building and it is available for all activities.



One of Ionia's greatest improvements in later years came when the state built an all weather road through the center of the town. This road was built in 1954. It is possibly the shortest highway in the state. It is less than one-half mile in length. Its number is 228.

In 1951, Mart Masterson came to Ionia and purchased the produce station from Ruby Rooker. Mart operated in the bank building and also in the building west of the drug store before moving to the present location which is in the last building on the south side of the street at the east end of town. Wollman had a restaurant there in 1916 or 1917 and Mable Davis had a boarding house in the late twenties and early thirties. This building held the first offices of The Jewell-Mitchell R. E. A.

The following are some of the people who operated in the Herman Colson building: Vernon Collie, post office; Leo Rice, post office; Earl Hall, post office; June Helmick, John Burdett, and Billy Alcorn, post office. All of these proprietors carried the drug line.

Other postmasters were Raymond Holloway, Dorothy Stites, and Ruby Rooker. When Ruby Rooker acquired the position she moved it to the telephone office where it remains today.

Another citizen that deserves mention is Clyde Wilson. He and his son Waldo take care of the communities local and long distance hauling. Clyde, who has been in the trucking business for over



THE PATE MANSION IN 1910



THE OLD IONIA MERCANTILE IN 1907



THE POUND BROTHERS STORE IN 1910

twenty years, has a driving record that can hardly be challenged. He has driven almost two million miles without an accident.

Ionia remains today with nine business places including a produce station, two grocery stores, a drug store, a restaurant, two service stations, and two garages.

## THE PATE MANSION

The Pate Mansion was built by Davis Pate in 1871 to 1874. It was said to be the nicest house between Denver and Kansas City at the time. It was constructed of native stone and the lumber for the woodwork was hauled from Hastings. Being unable to obtain cement at that time, Mr. Pate built lime pits and manufactured his own lime for the mortar. Including a full basement, it was a full three-story house with two fireplaces, one in the kitchen and one in the basement. Nothing was spared in the way of luxury, even to the mechanical bell on the hall door.

It stood nine miles northwest of Ionia on a hill one-half mile east of Dyrel Burdett's house in a large grove of cedars which had been hauled from the Platte River and planted by Mr. Pate. Many of these cedars are still standing.

For many years the old house was said to have been haunted. This was probably started when a school teacher shot himself in one of the upper rooms.

The old house was torn down in 1919 and the stone used in the Hollenbeck house just north of Dentonia.

## THE OLD IONIA MERCANTILE

We will call it the old Ionia Mercantile because it was the first of two that were built in the same place. It stood where the A. & B. Oil Company now stands. It was a large building with just one floor. Besides the main building, a little store was built against the west side.

For years it was one of the main places of business until about the tenth or the twelfth of July in 1910 when it burned leaving nothing but ashes and twisted metal where it had served the community for so many years.

A hotel stood just west of the store and it also went up in smoke. Mable Davis was operating it at that time. Thanks to a west wind, the new bank, west of the hotel, was spared.

## THE POUND BROTHER STORE

This store was built in 1882 and was owned and operated by Pounds until Titus and Shuck purchased it in 1893.

It was a large two-story building. The upper story was a large hall used for shows and other entertainment. Later it was partitioned into several rooms with a hallway running the full length through the center and a stairway in the back. The first telephone office



**THE FARMERS MERCANTILE**



**THE NEW IONIA MERCANTILE IN 1914**

was in the front room on the west side. The lower floor was most always a grocery and dry goods store.

The little building against the east side was Dr. Duncanson's office for a long time. It was in the summer of 1920 when this building caught fire and burned to the ground. Evert Alcorn had a store in it at that time. This building stood where The Home Service Station stands today.

## THE FARMERS MERCANTILE

This store was built by Wiley Alcorn in 1907 or 1908 on the site of Ben Kuiken's lumber yard. It was probably the largest and the nicest building ever built in Ionia. It had two stories, the lower floor was always used for groceries and dry goods. We can not find the records of all the people that operated this store but we know Wiley was the first. Alex Burdett had it a few years and sold it to Montgomery.

In 1920 a group of men formed a company and operated it under the name of the Farmers Mercantile Company. This was an unsuccessful venture for different reasons, one of the main ones due to the fact the manager disappeared, leaving the company in a financial rut.

In 1927, C. D. Sarratt, a merchant from Nebraska, purchased it and operated it more or less successfully until the fall of 1930 when it caught fire and burned along with the livery barn. C. D., as everybody called him, saved a small part of his stock and moved it across the street to the Dusenberry building. He later moved to the Dugger building and remained there until the spring of 1935. C. D. was a great booster for Ionia and a good community man. He died in California.

For many years the upper floor of the Farmers Mercantile was the only opera house Ionia had. It contained a stage with dressing rooms and a small basketball court. Ionia suffered a great loss when this building burned.

## THE NEW IONIA MERCANTILE

The last spark from the fire of 1910 had hardly died when plans were started for the erection of a new Ionia Mercantile. It was but a few months until a new building stood where the old one was destroyed by fire.

It was built with a partition dividing it into two parts. The east side was used for groceries and dry goods and the west part for hardware. Berry and McCammon had the hardware for a long time but Wiley Alcorn and Wint Hoag were operating it at the time of the fire.

It was during a blizzard on April 3, 1920 that this store burned taking with it a little grocery store that stood just west of it. This little store was operated by Riley More.



ED TUCKER'S CAFE IN 1909



THE LIVERY STABLE

## TRANSPORTATION

Present day discussions of the horse and buggy days might lead one to believe that everybody at one time drove a buggy.

There were a good many buggies at one time but the vehicle that contributed the most toward the settlement of the west was the common lumber wagon or farm wagon. It was almost impossible to carry on the process of farming without one. The Mitchell wagon was one of the most popular and built about like most of the others. It was constructed almost entirely of well seasoned oak and hickory with just enough iron to bind it together and protect the wearing parts. The wheels were over three feet high and all wood with iron bands shrunk on the hubs to keep them from checking and splitting.

The tire was a band of one-half inch iron. This was also shrunk tight to the wheel and often in dry weather the wheel would dry out and shrink, leaving the tire loose. It must then be taken to the blacksmith where it would be heated and reshrunk to the wheel.

The box was standard, ten feet long, three feet wide, and twenty six inches deep. It was used to haul about everything that was to be moved. It was driven to town, it was taken to dances, and when the whole family went, they would sometimes set the kitchen chairs in the box furnishing seats for the older people and if it was cold, a layer of straw spread on the floor would help to protect their feet against frost bite.

The buggy offered considerably more comfort as a way of traveling. Unlike the lumber wagon it had springs and on some a rubber band was added to the iron tire to help cushion the jars and jolts. Most of them had a top that offered some protection from the weather but they were open in front and when one faced a storm or the wind they furnished practically no protection. They were drawn by either one or two horses.

The carriage was somewhat on the order of the buggy but much larger and had two seats. Some of them were very luxurious even to the extent of kerosene lights and side curtains.

Although automobiles and trucks came in the fore part of the century, it was almost fifty years before the horse drawn vehicle became impractical. There are a few still being used at this time.

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Bear      50 - 25  
alvee      50 - 22  
goat      20 - 25

Frederick      35 - 45  
Dolley      50 - 25  
Butcher      20 - 15  
Becky      10 - 10

Marty      25 - 25  
Terry      275 - 5  
John Thomas      110



